

Contemplations
ON THE
LOVE
OF
GOD, &c.
WITH A
DEVOUT PRAYER
Sutable thereunto.

God is Love. 1 Joh. 4. 8.

L O N D O N,
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Contemplations
ON THE
LOVE of GOD, &c.

Religion is all Love, and Love is the whole of Religion; whoever loves as he should, lives as he should. Love is the Perfection of Angels, the Happiness of Heaven, the Duty and the Reward of Religion.

LOVE is the highest Progress that can be made in Religion, its utmost Advances are Love; and the Difference betwixt Heaven and Earth, is only more Love. Love will do and suffer all Things; 'twill make our Duty our Joy; 'twill mingle Heaven with this Life, and make our Obedience choice; and ravish us with Beauty, and inflame us with Desires after that which is best and fairest; and draw our Souls up to Heaven, while our Bodies are groveling here on Earth. Love can it self engrave

an Heaven in the Soul here on Earth, and enrich it with unspeakable Joys ; without Love we are dead, with it we are immortal , and in Heaven, even before Death. Love will do and suffer all Things that are pleasing to the infinitely Beloved ; 'twill be pleas'd more with Sufferings than with Happiness and Pleasure, when it believes that to be more pleasing to the Beloved ; and 'tis the infinitely Beloved from whence this Love comes, and who bestows this best of Gifts, this Joy of Angels, this Beauty and Glory of Heaven it self: From hence is the little Peace that is to be found on Earth, and those many secret Paradises in the Soul of good Men ; hence the Beauty and Order of the Mind ; hence the Agonies of a flaming and impatient Hope ; hence the Ardors of Faith, and the Evidence of Things not seen, but believed, by the Lover on the Word of the Beloved ; hence Victory and Triumph in Misery, or in Torments ; hence Hope against Hope ; hence we trust in God, though he should slay us , and are assured that

that our Redeemer lives, and ceases not to make intercession for us; hence Temples, Altars, and Vows, and all the burning Solitary Loves of the Ancient Hermits; and hence the holy Cities in the Desarts, and the Sacred Crowds in the Wilderness; hence *Anthony* and *Paul*, and the *Maccharii* Wonders; hence *Simeon*, *Moses*, and *Hillaryon* to be had in everlasting Memory, and much the holy *St. Jerom*, and the more excellent *Cassianus*, have endeavoured it. From Love is all the Happiness of both the Worlds; by it Death is smiling, and chearful as Life, and more desirable, as leading to the Sight of the so much Beloved, from whom Life detained; if we loved much, we would do and suffer any Thing for the Beloved; and to prove our Love, we should delight in Difficulties, and court Hardships, and provoke the Enemies of God our Beloved. 'Tis Love that conquers Sin, and pursues the Heights of Vertue, and the Purity of Heaven, even in this Life;
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'tis Love, assisted by the dear Beloved, that resists unto Death, and in Tortures refuses Deliverance, that it may behold the Face of the Beloved, and see the Face that burnt the Heart, and turned Love into Martyrdom.

By Love we usually believe and receive whatsoever our Religion delivers to us, as knowing it to be the Voice of the Beloved, who will not, who cannot deceive us ; but is our Light as well as our Life ; our Way as well as our Friend ; who will guide us with his Love, and direct us by his Kindness, how to Love, and what to Believe. By Love we cut off all Infidelity and Distrust, Obstinacy and Pride, the Vanity of our own Judgment, and the opposing Humility of Faith, with the Arrogance of Reason, and the Insolence of Discourse. Love makes us suffer Chearfully whatsoever is sent for the Tryal of our Love, and Rejoices at the Occasion. Love is restless while it breathes on Earth , and is kept from its Beloved, who is all its Joy, and

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and all its Life, and all its Hope, and the very *Shots* of the other Life; its greatest Pleasure, and its main Support. Love instructs us in every Duty, and takes off the Difficulty, and inhances the Reward; it gives Strength and Faith, Courage and Perseverance, and gives us a large and charming Prospect of Heaven, though at so great a Distance; it delights in Labours, and increases by Opposition; is never Tired, never Faints, is never Overcome; still Hopes, still Rejoices, and still Perseveres to the End. By Love we pray with Faith, and receive the Things asked for, because we believe we should; and 'twas Love that made us believe: It makes us Sincere and Constant, Humble and Generous, Kind and Good; and without it we are Obstinate and Sullen, Untractable and Conceited, Dull and Confident, Presumptuous and Unprofitable, Unhappy to our selves as well as others, Ungenerous, Unmanly, without Religion, without Angels, without a God, lost to all
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the Comforts of this Life, and the immortal Joys of that to come ; Bastards instead of Heirs , Oppressive and Uncharitable, Mean and Ambitious, Base yet Proud, Arrogant yet Ignoble.

By Love we enter upon the Life of Angels, and taste the Joys of Heaven, and burn in Charity with Cherubims, and grow above this mortal Life, and all its little Concerns, and become Denizens of the new *Jerusalem*, the everlasting City, and converse with the blessed and immortal Spirits ; Flaming in Love like them, still Praising , still Adoring : Triumphant with the Martyrs , Rejoicing with the Confessors, Loving with the Angels, Panting with the Cherubims, Singing with the Seraphims, Adoring with the Thrones, Ray'd with Love, Clad with Glory, Exalted by Musick, Raised by Hymns now greater than Crowns, and all this World ; earnest for the glorious Inheritance , and impatient for the fulness of the Joy, we have already so largely talked of.

'Tis Love that fills the Mind with charming Notions, and the brightest Images : She is the Mistress of Concord, and Societies of Peace and Harmony, of real Joys, and lasting Satisfaction ; from Love are all the purest Notions of Vertue and Worship, of Adoration and Obedience : She is the fairest Guide, and most charming Friendship, and the wisest Instructor. By Love the World is ruled , and Violence suppress'd , and Government maintained, and Order is preserved , and Kingdoms stand, and Commonwealths obey'd ; for without Love , Laws would be of little Strength, and Force and Malice would turn all into Confusion and Anarchy , and fill the World with Murther and Rapine, Violence and Oppression, Fury and Slaughter.

Love is the Way of the Perfect, and leads through the brightest Paths to dazzling Glory, and inexpressible Bliss ; which nothing in this World so nearly resembles as Love , and perhaps it's only more Love that makes Heaven a happier Abode than

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this dull Earth, that's over-run with
Discourse and Malice, with Rage
and Revenge, with Folly and Vio-
lence, with Darkness and Disorder.

By Love we conquer all the Inju-
ries and Calamities we meet with,
and walk prosperously on our Way,
dissolving the Oppressor with Coals
of Love, Returns of Kindness, and
Surprizing Forgivenesses and Par-
dons, while he was meditating a se-
cond Mischief, and a repeated though
unprovok'd Evil, takes a better Heart,
and a nobler Mind, and is melted in-
to Love, and forc'd into a Friend.

By Love we not only bear our Tri-
als but rejoice in them, as the Proofs
of our Love, and our further Endear-
ment to the Beloved ; as Arguments
of our Sincerity, and Opportunity to
shew how much we Love, and how
violently ; and how much we are in
Earnest, and how much we would
Endure, rather than be divorced from
him, who came down from Heaven,
and from all his Glory, to love us to
Death.

By Love we die daily to this World,
and

and seek after the more perfect Love of the other ; that our Breasts may burn like Angels, and the Apostles, while the Prince of Love expounded the Scriptures ; that we may arrive at his Sight who is *the Fairest among ten thousand* ; that we may dwell on perfect Beauty for ever, and feign with unmeasurable Love, and endless flaming Vows, to the Beloved of our Souls ; who draws us by all the strongest Charms of Beauty and of Love, to live and die for him, to act and suffer every Thing, to seek nothing but the pleasing him in whom our Love lives, moves, and has its Being ; and is restless till the Bars of Nature are broke, and the shining Way is laid open that leads to the Fountain of Love and Beauty, to the Rapture of our Souls, and to unspeakable Bliss and Charms, that are violent as Storms, and soft as ^{Peace}, and Musick, and Sleep, and last as long as the new Heavens.

'Tis Love that makes all the Peace that is in the World, and cements Friendship, and makes them stronger

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than Blood, and to act like Religion, and has produced Men greater than Heroes, and all the fleeted Histories of Antients, that delighted to abuse themselves and us, with Fables unworthy to be told and heard by Men. Love does Things that desire no Histories, and are greater than all History; and are well known in Heaven, and observed by Angels, though unknown on Earth, and concealed from Men: It tries, and discovers, and exposes the Hypocrite, but renews the Sincere, and gives them Strength and Perseverance, and inflames them with the brightest Passions, and Charms to the noblest Actions, and strengthens them to the greatest Sufferings, fixing their Hope, and confirming their Faith, and making it bright and flaming, as the Mansions which no Eye has seen, but that of Faith; and pushes them on to the noblest Undertaking, to attempt Things above Poetry, and beyond the Force of human Power: And such the Martyrs often did, and such the glorious Confessors, who raging
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with Love, and transported with the most violent and dearest Affections, to the Father, Son, and Spirit, fought their beatifick Vision through Racks and Fire, and mounted on Flames to Heaven.

'Tis Love that furnishes Arguments to support our Spirits, when broken and disperst by a hard and unkind World, that has always treated Vertue hard, and the Righteous with the Portion of Sinners; their Love guilds the Storm, and pierces the Cloud with light; and, speaking like our Saviour, rebukes the Wind, and bids the Sea be still, and suffers not the Righteous to be as the Wicked; but distinguishes 'em in the Calamity, and snatches 'em out of the Fire, in which the Wicked are consumed to Ashes: But Love preserves its Martyrs, and its Confessors, and if they die they live for ever, and are crown'd for all their Sufferings; and the exceeding great Reward drowns the Labour, and covers the Martyrs with Psalms, and he is lost in Glory, and in Crowns, and shines forth

forth for ever, like the Sun *in the Kingdom of the Father*, and dies no more, but is equal to the Angels, being born of the Resurrection.

By Love we become easy to our selves, and others too, and the harshness of our Natures is worn off, and our very Blood is sweetned as well as our Spirits ; by it we dismiss our Humours, and our Pride , and all the Contentions that ensue from thence, the Arrogance and Contempt , the great Opinion of our selves, and the little Value for others ; the haughty Melancholy , and unsociable Meen and Carriage , that expects to be pleased in every Thing , and complies in nothing.

But Love is humble, and quiet as the Grave, and undisturbed as the upper Region of the Air, that's never torn nor driven by Storms and Tempests ; but is Smooth and Even, as the Face of Heaven ; it receives the Injury in Peace, and revenges it with Kindness ; its Contentions are those of rival Friendship, and an ambitious Generosity ; and as it receives every
Injury

Injury with Patience, so is careful to offer none; it has no Designs but to promote the Good of its Neighbour, which it always studies, as its own; 'tis gentle, 'tis useful, 'tis pitiful, 'tis helpful; rejoices not in Iniquity, but rejoices in the Truth; bears with all Men, loves all Men, forgives all Men, obliges All.

By Love we bind the Furies of our Neighbour, and chain his Violence, and he is spent in Vain, like an angry Wave against a Rock, and his Passion becomes as insignificant as the airy Flame that floats upon the Face of the Waters, and he only rages against his own Wisdom and Glory, and for a Time prefers that Rage of a Beast, to the Order and Beauty of a Man, to the Glory and Empire of Reason, and to the Peace of God that dwells with the peaceful Soul.

By Love we delight in our Duty towards God, and towards Man. By Love every Thing is made easy, but nothing more so than our Duty, because nothing is more capable; for in it is all our Interest, and our Happiness,

nels, and all our Hopes ; in it embark all our Labours, and our Sweat, and Treasure ; and therefore nothing can be dearer to us than our Duty, and our Sufferings, and our Confessions, for his Name in whom we trust ; who in all our Sorrows will feed us with his Love, and enrich us with his Favour, and enable us with Crowns : He who bids us fight, will teach us to fight, and shew us how to conquer ; and if we die in his Favour there is Life, and at his Right-hand there are unutterable Pleasures for evermore ; Joys as violent as our Sufferings, and rending Transports, and over-powring Consolations , that require an Enlargement of our Souls to endure them, which else would burst with Torments of Delight, and Agonies of Pleasure, and furious Bliss.

By Love we understand what in every Circumstance, and at all Times, is most pleasing to the Beloved of our Souls ; for nothing is more knowing than Love, that knows all Things by communication with the Beloved, and informs the humble Lover, who re-
joices

A Prayer to God, &c. 15

joices in every intimation of the Divine Will, and desires to perform it with Ardor. Love will direct beyond all the Learning in the World, which is never to be compared to Love, the brightest and highest Ornament of the Soul; 'tis Paradise on Earth, 'tis earthly Heaven, 'tis sweetest Treasure, 'tis golden Joy, and utmost Happiness, next to God, to himself; and God himself is Love, and *he who dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God*, and he who dwelleth in God must needs dwell in Heaven too. *Laus Deo.*

A Prayer to God,

Which the Christian Soul may make every Day, thereby to declare the Sentiments which she desires to have at the point of Death. Wherein are discover'd the Acts of all the biggest Vertues, and especially the Divine Vertue of Contrition, and a perfect Love of God.

O My Lord, and my God, in that uncertainty in which thou art pleased that I should live, as well in relation to the Time and Place, as

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Manner of my Death; I come to adore the Orders of thy Divine Providence, for what thou hast appointed from all Eternity : And not knowing what the Sentiments of my Soul may be at that Hour, I do at present that which I desire should be done then, and I humbly pray thee to accept and ratify against that time, what I declare and protest at present.

I give thee thanks, O my Lord, and my God, at this Instant, instead of the last Moment of my Life, when possibly being deprived both of Speech and Reason, I may not be able either to speak or think of thee. I thank thee, First, for giving me a Birth, and that I was not left without a Being. Secondly, That thou wert pleased that I should be born in a Place among Christians, and in a Time when the Light of the Gospel is shining upon us, whereas thou might'st have caused my Nativity to have happened in an Age of Darkness, and in a Country of Infidels. Thirdly, That thou hast regenerated me by Baptism, when thou might'st let me have died in my Mothers Womb,

Womb, as so many others have, before they could receive it.

I adore thee, O my God, as the Original of my Life in Nature, as the Original of my Generation by Grace, as the last end of my Soul, and as my last Felicity in Glory! Thou art the first Verity, and I firmly believe what thou hast said: Thou art the Sovereign Fidelity, and I incessantly hope what thou hast promised: Thou art the Supreme Goodness, and I love only, and would love only, that which thou art.

'Tis thou, O my God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, One in Essence, and Three in Persons, who hast Created me by the Effect of thy Power, who hast Redeemed me by the Excess of thy Bounty, who hast Sanctified me by the Infusion of thy Grace, who hast Guided me by the Conduct of thy Providence, and who hast Ordained me to the Participation of thy Glory.

For this end thou hast admitted me into the Bosom of the Church thy Spouse, there thou hast illuminated my Soul with thy purest Lights, there thou hast upheld me with thy most

Holy Graces, there thou hast touched me with thy most tender Motions, there thou hast prepared for me thy most Venerable Sacraments, there thou hast Fed me with the Sacred Body of *Jesus Christ*, thy only Son my Saviour, and there thou hast as often shewr'd down upon my Soul the Gifts and Graces of thy Divine Spirit.

O what Love! O what Benefactions! O what Condescensions! O what Favour! O what Graces! O what Mercies have been vouchsafed to this poor Soul! That in return for so many Blessings, (of which thou only knowest the Number and the Value) hath during the whole Course of its Life performed nothing but Impieties, Infidelities, Ingratitude, Iniquities and Crimes, surpassing in Number the Hairs of my Head, and Days of my Life.

But, O my Lord God, the more Shame belongs to me for having offended, the more Glory is due to thee for pardoning my Offences: And Sins without number, like mine, require a Mercy without end, like thine.

And

And to such an inexhaustible Mercy I approach, repenting for having so long offended thee, my Lord and my God, so lately known thee, and so little loved thee.

Were I never to enjoy more Time than this Moment, I would imploy it all in the Love of thee, O Sovereign Goodness! Because thou art what thou art, and because thou only dost merit the Love and Adoration of all thy Creatures.

'Tis for thy Sake alone, O eternal Love, who art ever Lovely, and never sufficiently Beloved, that I detest all the Sins of my Life; because they are contrary to thy adorable Sanctity. And I detest these Sins on the same Motive that my Lord *Jesus Christ* detested them at his Agony in the Garden; and on the same Motive on which thou, O my God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, One in Essence, and Three in Persons, dost detest them. And I humbly offer in Reparation of that Outrage and Displeasure which mine Iniquities have done thee, the Love and Obedience of my Blessed Saviour

Saviour *Jesus Christ* to atone for, and supply the Defects of mine.

In expiation of these Iniquities of my Life, I accept of Death, as a Traytor whom thou hast most justly Condemn'd to die ; I accept the Destruction of this Body, which has been the Foundation of so many Intemperances, and the Subject of so many Sins ; I accept of the Destruction of my whole Being, in Homage to that Sovereign Dominion which thou hast over me ; I accept of all Derelictions, all Bitterness of Spirit, all Anguishes, all Pains, all Temptations, and all Evils, (except only that of Sin and thy Displeasure) as all the Satisfaction which I can pay thy Adorable Majesty.

Not being able to do more, I beseech thee, O my Lord, and my God, to remember that I am the Work of thy Hands, the Purchase of thy Blood, the Conquest of thy Cross, the Wages of thy Death, and the Effect of thy Love. To thy Death I unite mine, and to thy Love I unite mine; protesting that I admit no Sentiments but those which
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are agreeable to the Faith of the Catholick Church ; and I disclaim, O Lord, all hopes and dependance, but in thy Merits, Love, and Goodness.

If ever any Thing appears in my Actions contrary to this, I disavow it, I renounce it. And I desire that the last Motion of my Heart may be a Motion of Adoration to do thee Homage for my Being, since that very Being belongs more to thee than to my self; O Father of Mercies , and God of all Comforts, under whose Command are all the Powers of my Soul, make my Life to expire in an Act of Love, raised by a clear Apprehension of thy Excellency and Goodness, and so vigorously exerted towards thee, the great and proper Object of Love, that being begun here it may continue to all Eternity.

It is true, O my God, that after all this my Fears are great, because my Crimes are so, and thy Judgments very terrible. But it is also true that notwithstanding all those Fears, yet my Hope is still greater, since thou art merciful and apt to pardon; thy Mercy

cy is transcendently Great, and thou dost Pardon without measure ; thy Mercy is infinite, and thou dost Pardon without end; thou art all Mercy, and Mercy it self , and thou Pardonest all.

Full of this ravishing and most sweet Confidence which I have in thee, I hope to see thy Blessings in the Land of the Living, where thou art the Resurrection and the Life ; and Adoring again thy Power that Created me, thy Goodness that Redeemed me , thy Wisdom which hath Enlightned me, thy Providence which hath Governed me, thy Mercy which hath Forgiven me so many Sins. I Adore also thy Justice ; and I submit my self intirely to the Time by thee appointed for my Judgment, with this Confidence and Trust, That thy Divine Goodness will not then cast me off, but will it self answer for me to thy Justice, and that I shall eternally sing of, and celebrate, thy Mercies World without end. *Amen.*